Sago bark waste can be used for interior decoration

KOTA SAMARAHAN – Nothing in a sago palm must go to waste. Even the sago bark waste can be effectively utilised for interior decoration and and turned into commercial products.

This was revealed in a recent research on maximum utilisation of sago bark waste by University Malaysia of Sarawak (Unimas), the result of which won a gold medal in the Public Institutions of Higher Learning (IPTA) Research and Development (R & D) Exposition 2005 in Putra World Trade Centre (PWTC) recently.

This was disclosed by Head of Design Technology Programme of Unimas and also the inventor of the 'Bio-composite Sago Bark Waste for Interior Decoration Products', Dr. Khairul Aidil Azlin Abdul Rahman yesterday.

Sago grows widely in peat land delta or riverine areas of Southeast Asia especially in Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and Malaysia.

Sarawak has along tradition of sago industry and over the years it has contributed significantly towards the socio- economic development of the State.

"Sago bark is the waste materials in the sago production industries. The locals use the barks of the trunk as timber fuel, wall materials, ceilings and fences," said Dr. Khairul.

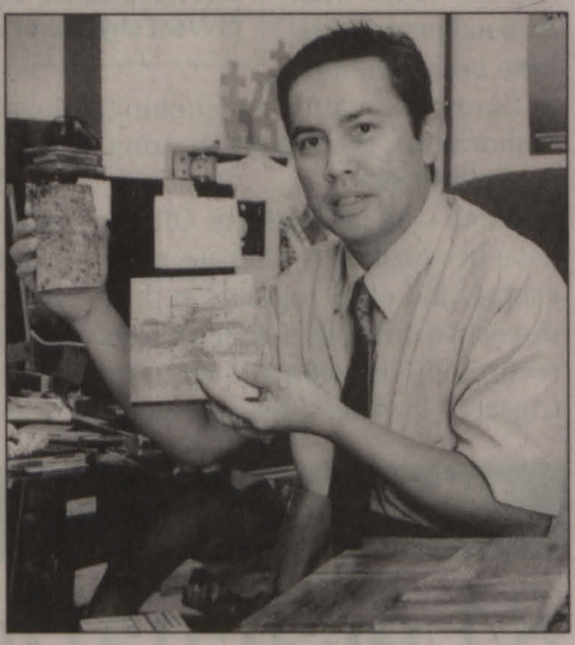
At present, sago bark is processed through bio-composite method to produce sago plywood and particleboard, which have potential as building materials.

"However, this process does not utilise the surfacial beauty and other natural features of the sago bark," he said.

Dr Khairul added that an ongoing, product development effort at Unimas had succeeded in converting waste sago barks into numerous interior decoration products.

The research on the sago bark waste is the first ever carried out in the State, thus in the country.

Shredded sago bark was cured and rebounded in moulds using resins to produce decorative wall tiles, said Dr. Khairul.



INNOVATIVE ... Dr. Khairul showing off his research product and gold medal. PHOTOGRAPH: RAMIDI SUBARI.

The low technology and simple procedures involved in this process should allow small industries to pick up this idea for commercial production, he said.

"But to go more further, support in term of budget and technologies is still needed for the research programmes," he added.

"The universities have pattern my product and the research. The research would be legally protected now," said Dr. Khairul.

"We in Unimas through this research for example will prove that our research outcome is marketable and can be used for commercialisation purposes," he said.

At the Exposition, Unimas showcased eight R & D products ranging from biotechnology to environmental engineering and each product win their prizes. Unimas bagged two gold, a silver and five bronze medals along with certificates.

More than 700 exhibitors from 42 countries with over 7, 000 visitors and investors will be expected to witness the event.

Unimas would bring at least ten of its R & D products including some from the winning award in IPTA Exposition 2005 to be showcased in the 34th International Exhibition in Geneva Switzerland in April.

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